

The Cinco Tinajas Trailhead is located approximately 1.3 miles west of Saucedo Headquarters. In Spanish, “cinco tinajas” loosely means “five pools” (technically, water-filled rock basins). You will indeed find five pools just a short hike from the trailhead. These pools contain water most of the year and as such are unusual features in the otherwise dry desert. The pools and nearby springs support many species of plants and animals and have been an important resource for people throughout history.

There are two options for scenic hiking in this area. The first is a short, easy walk to the tinajas. The second is a longer hike (Leyva Escondido Spring Loop) that takes you beyond the tinajas to Leyva Escondido Spring via Leyva Creek (to the east), up to a vista with 360-degree views, then southeast back toward the tinajas and the trailhead (see map).

Cinco Tinajas and the surrounding terrain is most suitable for hikers and equestrians. Mountain biking is not recommended. Hiking in the immediate vicinity of the trailhead and overlook is considered easy with few physical challenges. The Leyva Escondido Spring Loop is considered moderate-to-difficult with deep sand, steep climbs and unmaintained trail tread.

Be mindful of wildlife such as Javelina and rattlesnakes and always bring water!



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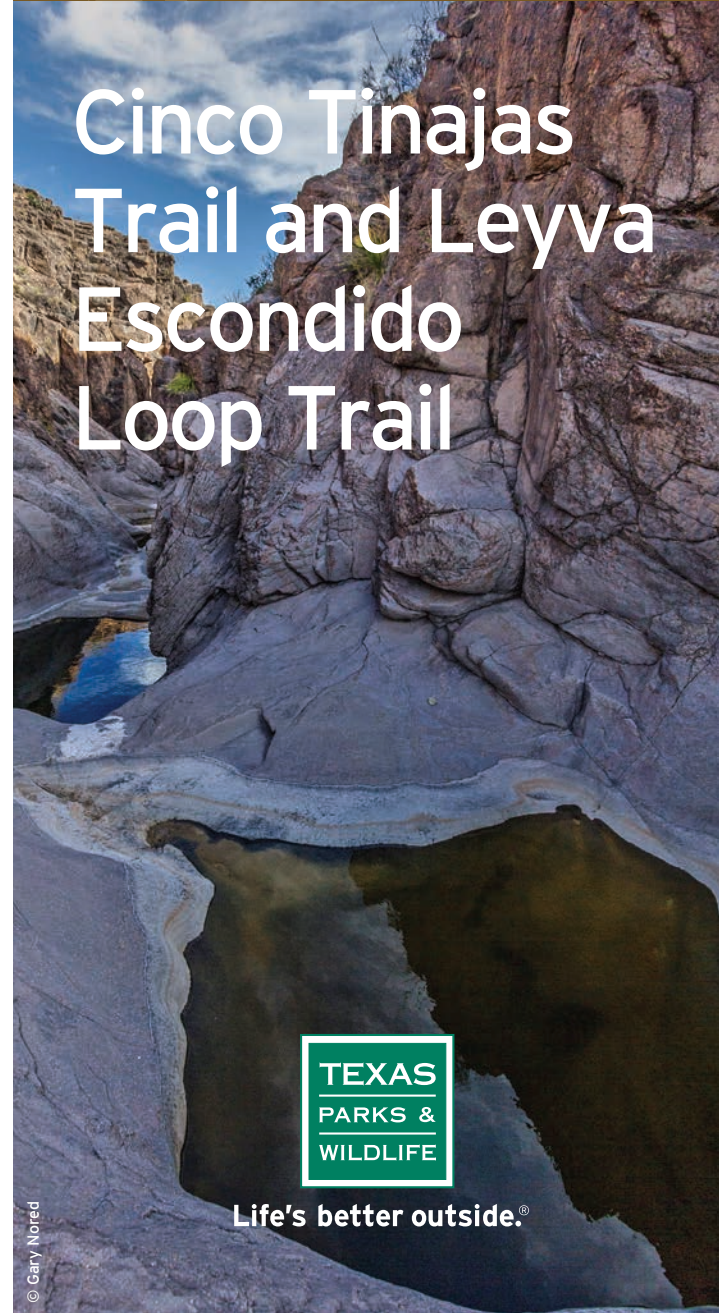
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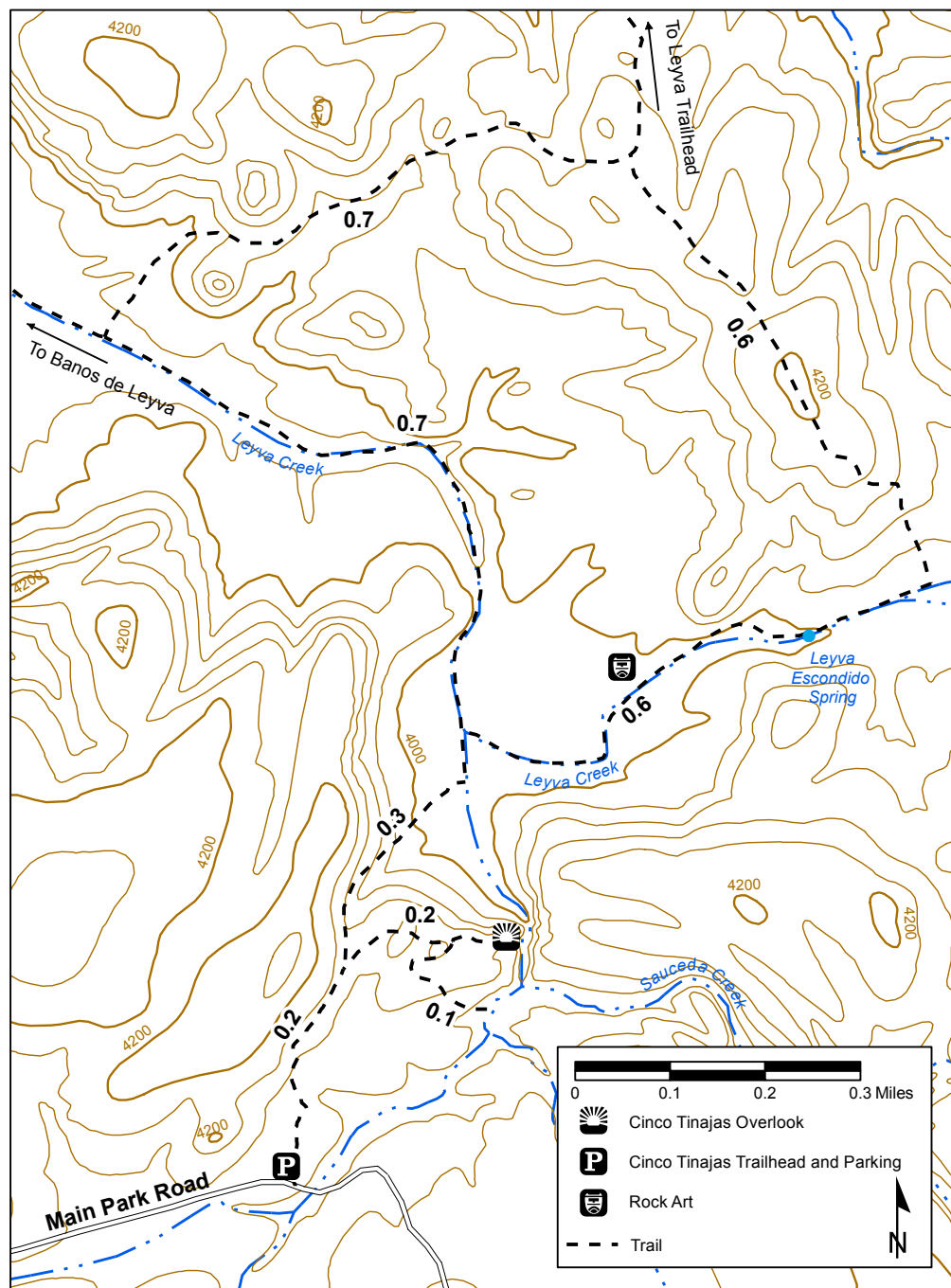
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Cinco Tinajas Trail and Leyva Escondido Loop Trail



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To Cinco Tinajas: From the trailhead, follow the trail (an old road) to the top of the ridge. There, look for stacked rock cairns and a rock alignment on the right (east) that mark the trail to the overlook. Note the prominent landmarks known as La Mota Mesa (north), Oso Peak (southwest) and Cerro Boludo (south). Oso Peak is the highest point in the park.

To get to the upper tinajas, backtrack from the overlook a short distance and follow the cairns left (south) down to the creek. There follow the cairns to the left (north) over an historic rock wall to the tinajas. To return, follow the same path back to the trail or follow the creek to the southwest back to the road and trailhead.

To get to the lower tinajas and pour-off: From the overlook turnoff, continue downhill (north-northeast) into the creek. Turn right (south) at the creek and follow it until you reach the narrow canyon and pools. Backtrack through the creek and up the same trail to return.

Use caution as the smooth rocks around the tinajas are very slippery when wet and the pools can be difficult or impossible to get out of alone. The tinajas are sensitive habitats for plants and animals; swimming is not allowed.

To Escondido Spring Loop: Follow the same route as above, but when you reach the trail marking the overlook, continue straight (north-northeast) downhill into the creek. On your way down you will pass through two fence posts a short distance past the junction with the overlook trail. From this vantage point you can see most of your route to the spring and up to the vista.

Take note of the short jog at the confluence of two drainages in the creek where you will trend to the right (east) toward a low rocky hill on the north side of the creek and to the spring just beyond. An archaeological site containing prehistoric pictographs (rock art) on large boulders occupies the lower slopes of the hill. Photographs of the rock art are okay, but please do not pick up any cultural materials or touch the rock art. Removal of cultural or natural materials from the park is illegal.

To continue the loop beyond the archaeological site, travel east in the creek bed approximately 0.5 of a mile. Leyva Escondido Spring is marked by dense vegetation and a stand of cottonwood trees. Just beyond the spring, cairns mark the trail out of the creek on the left (north) side of the creek. The trail ascends a steep hillside. It is faint and eroded in places, but head towards the top of the hill and it will pick up again. Continue traveling north-northwest approximately 1.2 miles to the junction with the trail that will return you to the creek to the left (west). Look to the southwest and you can see the trail to the trailhead, Cerro Boludo and Oso Peak. Keep those features in sight and there's no getting lost. Continue west-southwest approximately 0.6 of a mile. At the creek, turn left (south) and travel southwest approximately 0.7 of a mile to return to the Cinco Tinajas Trailhead.